

October 4, 2012

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors

Subject: Howard Training Center

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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On September 17, 2012, we attended a meeting at the Hammon Senior Center, in Patterson, under the direction of Carolyn Miller, Jill Erickson, Howard Training Center, Mrs. Palmetto, Area on Ageing and Director of Park and Recreation Adrienne Chaney.

The meeting was held on a Monday, because that is when most of the seniors are present for a lunch meal. The meeting was held in the dining room at the Hammon Senior Center.

The Senior Board of the Senior Center received a request from the seniors to have Howard Training Center, and Area on Ageing come before the board to answer several concerns that the seniors had concerning the lunch program.

It is our understanding that the Board of Supervisors is the governing body that Howard Training Center reports to. We also, understand that a grant has been granted to Howard Training Center, to serve Lunch meals, at the Hammon Senior Center, 5 day a week, 52 weeks a year.

The seniors were told back in June, that the lunch meals, would not be served 5 days a week as, the increase in meal request had risen to the point that they just did not have the funding. Starting in July, 3 meals a week would be served. At about the same time, the cost of meals went from \$2.00, donation, to \$3.00, donation. We realize that the meals are not considered an entitlement. However, we feel the way Howard Training Center has presented itself, even though they say, it is only a donation, it is still alright not to pay anything. This is confusing to seniors. Most seniors do pay that are able, and are thankful for the meal. Some senior were told at sometime, when they turned 90 years of age they did not have to pay?

When the general meeting was held on the 18th, we had a strong turn-out in number, and many spoke up. We are again thankful for the opportunity to express our concerns.

Below is a recap of questions/answers for your review;

- ◆ If we can't pay the \$2.00 how are we to pay \$3.00? (Seniors want to pay their share, not be made to feel like this is welfare.) Some truly are broke.

We suggest that perhaps, an audit should be made, showing exactly how the money is disbursed and to whom. We would like to see a financial statement showing a detailed breakdown. Total cost from purchase of food to return to Modesto.

As we understand, when the money is received in a locked box at the Hammon Senior Center, it is taken to Howard Training Center, in Modesto.

We were told that the grant is for x number of dollars, and to that is added an additional 10% by the State of California, additional 10% by the County. The grant will pay Howard Training Center \$5.00 from Federal, for each and every signature that is recorded at sign-in. If an in-take form is filled out, then the proof is traced by the last four social security number of the individual.

Prior to Howard Training Center taking this program there was; SOSF, Sheriff's Department, Salvation Army. All of them operated without any meals being stopped. Why now? Stanislaus County is the only county in the state that we can find that is not serving meals 5 days a week

- ◆ Asked, if the meals are not going to be served here on Tuesdays and Thursday, then why can't we get a brown bag or something like the shut-ins get?

We were told that you had to be a shut in, and no exceptions were allowed. If the seniors want to go to other sites on Tuesdays or Thursday they could get a ride and go. Really, some seniors have no one to take them, nor can they afford the bus fare.

- ◆ Why are some sites still getting 5 meals a day?
No answer.
- ◆ When we call to make reservations, we get a recording on a cell phone? It is a lady speaking, and she says: Senior Lunch Program, Patterson. Then when we show up for the meal, we are told that they didn't get the message. This was mentioned by several people. This has happened to us 4 times now. I was told not to worry we always order more meals...

Told that not all of the staff is cell phone savvy. I called the cell while the meeting was going on; it was answered by a live person? Still having the same problem today. No record of my call.

- ◆ Several seniors, also mentioned, that the kitchen staff, is not always wearing gloves when serving food.

Told they just they put all of their employees through a training class again, to prevent this, on all volunteers and employees.

- ◆ Several seniors spoke of the food either being over cooked, or not cooked enough.

One time hamburger was so over cooked that it was sent back. Had to wait additional one and one half hours to get food.

One time pork chops were served, with apple sauce on top, when ask why apple sauce was on top, was to, that is our gravy?

- ◆ Sometimes, we get to much food, and other times not enough. We have received several times cold food that should have been served HOT!

Don't know what they use to measure.

- ◆ Spanish people wanted a Spanish menu. That has been provided.
- ◆ We asked if the In-take forms are still being used, were told yes, yet several seniors stated they had not filled out any paperwork. This is the only way to verify that seniors qualify for the meal program.

Below is what we have observed that may help to solve some of the challenges

- 1) There is a telephone on the wall in the dining room that may be used to take reservations. This would save money on all the cell phones, 13 sites, plus drivers, plus admin employees. The cell phone is ALWAYS a long distance call, the landline telephone is NOT long distance for the seniors.

- 2) If you receive 20 calls for reservations, then order **ONLY** 20 meals.
- 3) Keep the cash box on the same table, as the sign in, and encourage seniors if at all possible please put something in the box, do this as a reminder only.
- 4) Correct your monthly calendar, showing meals 3 days a week, not 5.
- 5) Continue turn over in staff, why?

We are not put in a position what we have gone to our City Council, and asked for help. We have now formed a Senior Meals Task Force to look at the challenges that have been presented to us.

We were told that the Board of Supervisors had Howard Training Center, on the last Agenda; no one on the Westside was notified. Why, your decision affects of all the seniors within our community.

We would like to have this put back on the agenda, where all are allowed to speak up, and have an open, honest discussion on this topic.

We thank you for your time, and hope to hear from you soon.

P.S. The meal program is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get!

Sincerely,

Kenneth & Mary Bennett,
SENIORS